

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Congressman Joe Courtney today announced new legislation to ensure that Medicare covers the costs of skilled care for seniors. The bill, H.R. 5950, would allow for the time patients spend in the hospital under “observation status” to count toward the requisite three-day hospital stay for coverage of skilled nursing care.

Currently, Medicare covers the first 20 days of nursing home stays if residents first have been admitted to the hospital for three days as an inpatient. Increasingly, patients are being admitted for observation only, and do not qualify for skilled care after their stay.

“This commonsense change will ensure that seniors no longer face thousands of dollars in bills for skilled care because of an arbitrary federal policy,” Courtney said. “There are no two ways about it: three days in the hospital is three days in the hospital. Anyone who meets that threshold should receive the same benefit from Medicare. It’s as simple as that.”

Courtney held a press conference today announcing the bill, and was joined by patients and families who have been affected by the current rule. Attendees included Nancy Renshaw of Bozrah, whose father-in-law faced a \$10,000 bill for skilled nursing after spending five days in the hospital under “observation status” after breaking his hip.

Courtney’s legislation would:

- Amend Medicare law to count a beneficiary’s time spent in the hospital on “observation status” towards the three-day hospital stay requirement for skilled nursing care;

- Allow those with pending appeals at the time of passage to benefit from Medicare coverage of skilled nursing care.

H.R. 5950 is endorsed by the following groups and organizations:

AFSCME Retirees  
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging  
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirees  
American Health Care Association  
American Medical Directors Association  
American Society for Aging  
B'nai B'rith International  
Catholic Health Association of the US  
Center for Medicare Advocacy  
Easter Seals  
Families USA  
Gray Panthers  
Medicare Rights Center  
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys  
National Association of Home Care and Hospice

National Association of Area Agencies on Aging  
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services  
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers  
National Association of Social Workers  
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsmen  
National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities  
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged, Inc.  
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare  
National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care  
National Council on Aging  
National Osteoporosis Foundation  
National Senior Citizens Law Center  
OWL- the Voice of Midlife and Older Women  
PHI-Quality Care through Quality Jobs  
Service Employees International Union  
Women's Institute for a Secure Retirement